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SUBJECT: SWEDISH PLAN TO SUPPORT SIRTRE TALKS FOCUSES ON JOB TRAINING FOR FIGHTERS

REF: KHARTOUM 1711

¶11. (SBU) Summary: Poloff attended a working-level meeting November 8 at the Swedish Embassy on a Swedish plan to provide non-lethal support to armed groups in order to stabilize the situation on the ground in Darfur to promote the success of the Sirte peace talks. To receive support, in the form of job training and per diem, participants would be required to place their guns "out of reach." Swedish CDA Ulrika Sundberg led the discussion, which included reps from the NGO community, the Dutch Embassy, and the UN Development Program. Sundberg described the draft program to S/E Natsios during his recent visit to Khartoum (reftel). Natsios noted that legal restrictions prevent the USG from contributing to such a program. End Summary.

REBELS TO BE OFFERED TRAINING

¶12. (SBU) The Swedes have been exploring the job training program for several weeks, seeking input from representatives (so far, only Khartoum-based) of Darfur rebel groups and other western embassies. Rebel leaders have reportedly been supportive of the concept. The aim is to provide job-training and subsistence to members of armed groups so that they will not have to engage in banditry to survive while the peace talks are ongoing. Rebels receiving assistance would place their weapons under external control for the duration of the training (length of training has not yet been determined). Ideally, a peace plan would be in place by the end of the training to ensure the weapons would be taken permanently out of commission. Sundberg said participation in the program would not preclude subsequent DDR (Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration) participation - addressing a key concern of rebel fighters.

¶13. (SBU) Under the current plan, field commanders would decide which of their fighters would participate in the program. Empowering the field commanders would give them a "peace incentive," Sundberg said. Field commanders would have to voice support for the peace talks and to keep their men in line.

WEAPONS CONTROL MECHANISM TO BE DETERMINED

¶14. (SBU) The Swedes have not yet worked out a feasible mechanism whereby the weapons would be placed out of reach of the combatants and under external control, and are seeking additional ideas. The trainees would have to know they could have access to the weapons in case of attack. Among the possibilities, Sundberg noted, would be to give responsibility for the arms to field commanders or tribal leaders, although she said she was "not comfortable" with giving them to the field commanders. A representative of the UNDP DDR program said a "dual-key" mechanism had proven effective in similar circumstances in other conflict zones (whereby approval of two authorities would be required to access the weapons).

QUICK IMPLEMENTATION KEY TO SUCCESS

¶5. (SBU) Sundberg, along with others at the meeting, stressed that the program would need to be put into effect quickly to ensure success. A realistic time frame would be to have the program running within three to four weeks of a Cessation of Hostilities. She said she would travel in early December to El Fasher to discuss the program with rebel leaders and field commanders, and invited others to join her on the trip. She estimated that six to eight thousand fighters would take advantage of the training program.

COMMENTS SOUGHT

¶6. (SBU) Sundberg requested comments on the draft program from all present. She said comments would be worked into a new draft, which would then be given a formal presentation to the international/NGO community. She has not yet approached the GOS about the plan.

¶7. (SBU) Comment: The Swedish proposal addresses one of the common causes of instability during a cessation of hostilities and peace talks: how to provide an immediate "peace dividend" for armed fighters who otherwise might not have any means of support until a peace agreement takes effect with a DDR program. The current plan takes into account concerns expressed by S/E Natsios (reftel) that the program target only armed fighters (who are the potential spoilers) irrespective of traditional NGO humanitarian principles that all individuals be able to participate. The Swedish are eager to receive our input on the plan, which we will scan and email to S/E Natsios and SPG. One of the basic drawbacks it faces is that it is only a short-term solution to a long term problem. We also plan to suggest that the Swedes look at models from other countries where similar efforts have been made, such as Burundi or Congo.

FERNANDEZ